



KATHLEEN BABINEAUX BLANCO, GOVERNOR

Office of Youth Development

Simon G. Gonsoulin, Deputy Secretary

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State Gives Public the Opportunity to Shape Juvenile Justice Reform *First of 11 Regional Meetings to Take Place Tuesday in Lafayette*

BATON ROUGE, La. – The Louisiana Office of Youth Development is taking its juvenile justice reform planning on the road.

OYD is holding 11 meetings throughout the state over the next few months to gather input from stakeholders on its five-year strategic plan that will be released this fall (*see page 2 for a schedule of meetings*). **The first meeting will be held from 3 – 6:30 p.m. Tuesday on the 4th floor of the 15th Judicial District Courthouse, 800 S. Buchanan in Lafayette.**

The agency has invited numerous stakeholders -- child welfare advocates, educators, judges, policymakers, government agency representatives and others – to participate in work sessions to develop reform strategies and activities. OYD Deputy Secretary Simon Gonsoulin will open the meetings with a presentation about reform efforts up to this point. The meetings are open to the public.

"We know that there are a lot of ideas out there, and we want to incorporate as many of them as we can into our reform plan," Gonsoulin said. "Public engagement is going to be key to the success of our reform, and we want to involve communities early in the process."

Since last fall the state has been working with the Annie E. Casey Foundation and Mark Steward, director of the Missouri's Department of Youth Services, to develop and implement strategies for reforming secure care facilities and transitioning to more community-based services that keep young people closer to home. Strategies identified include youth and public safety, family involvement, development of a seamless continuum of care, community involvement and partnership and data-driven outcomes.

Louisiana's reform effort took a major step forward earlier this week when the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation selected Louisiana as a national Model for Change in juvenile justice reform. Appearing at a press conference with Governor Kathleen Babineaux Blanco and Gonsoulin, MacArthur representative Laurie Garduque announced that Louisiana will receive a five-year \$7.5 million grant to accelerate its reforms. Louisiana is the third state that MacArthur has designated as a Model for Change.

Also this week OYD announced the hiring of former middle school principal Prince Gray for the new position of family ombudsman, which is designed to increase family engagement in youngsters' rehabilitation and treatment. OYD is developing orientation videos and informational programs describing family involvement opportunities, educational programs, treatment services and other elements of the system that can help youth turn their lives around.

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OYD serves about 5,000 youth in community-based programs, parole and probation programs and at secure care facilities including Bridge City Center for Youth, Jetson Center for Youth near Baton Rouge and Swanson Center for Youth in Monroe.

Louisiana's juvenile justice reform gained momentum two years ago when the Legislature passed the Juvenile Justice Reform Act of 2003. Last year, in one of her first actions as governor, Blanco made juvenile justice reform a top priority of her administration by ordering the separation of the Office of Youth Development from the Department of Public Safety and Corrections. This change underscored the new emphasis of juvenile justice in Louisiana from corrections to one centered on the treatment and rehabilitation of youth.

Here is the full schedule of regional meetings:

JUNE 28 - LAFAYETTE

4th Floor, 15th Judicial District
Courthouse
800 S. Buchanan
3 - 6:30 pm

JULY 11 - LAKE CHARLES

The Leadership Center for Youth
1701 Ryan Street
3 - 6:30 pm

JULY 20 - BATON ROUGE

LA Resource Center for Educators
7305 Florida Blvd., Suite D
3 - 6:30 pm

AUGUST 1 - HARVEY

Jefferson Parish Forensic Center
2018 8th Street
4 - 7 pm

AUGUST 10 - PINEVILLE

Pineville Community Center
708 Main Street
3 - 6:30 pm

AUGUST 11 - THIBODAUX

Betsy Cheremie Ayo Hall Auditorium
Nicholls State University
3 - 6:30 pm

AUGUST 22 - HAMMOND

SLU University Center, West University Ave.
3 - 6:30 pm

AUGUST 23 - SHREVEPORT

Rutherford House, 1707 Line Ave.
3 - 6:30 pm

AUGUST 24 - MONROE

700 University Ave., Seventh Floor
ULM Library
4 - 7 pm

AUGUST 29 - NATCHITOCHES

2nd Floor, District Courthouse
200 Church Street
3 - 6:30 pm

SEPTEMBER 8 - NEW ORLEANS

Delgado Student Life Center
615 City Park Ave.
3 - 6:30 pm

To arrange for seating and materials, OYD is asking participants to RSVP on the agency's website at www.oym.louisiana.gov or to Nita Franklin at nfranklin@oym.louisiana.gov or 225-287-7912.